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N´vah

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Jánmanubah better known as **Nubah**, also referred mistakenly as **N'vah** by the Nordlings and **An-Nūwah** by the Ofieris, is a land located in the Far South of the Old Continent. Its existence is only vaguely acknowledged in the Northern Kingdoms, primarily through the accounts of a handful of traders who occasionally reach port cities such as Gors Velen, Cidaris, and Novigrad to exchange goods.

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N´vah

General information	
Variation(s)	Jánmanubah, N´vah, Nubah or An-Nūwah
Status	Demarchy
Societal information	
Demonym	Jánmanubi, Nubahite, Nūwahi- or An-Nūwahi

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Etymology

The true name that the Nubahite people use to refer to their homeland remains uncertain. However, based on information inadvertently revealed by the so-called *Man of N'vah* during his imprisonment in Deireadh, some scholars speculate that the original term may have been Jánmanubah, roughly translatable as "*house of gold*" or "*home of gold*." The initial j is believed to be silent in Nubahite pronunciation.

This original name may have been later corrupted in Ofieri records as An-Nūwah, which in turn appears to have given rise to the Nordling exonym N'vah.

History

Early History

The origins of the Nubahite people remain shrouded in uncertainty. According to semihistorical written accounts preserved within their own tradition, the Nubahites trace their ancestry to a now-lost civilization located further north. This original society is said to have shared certain cultural and structural similarities with the ancient Hannuan civilization. However, a catastrophic earthquake reportedly devastated their homeland, prompting a large-scale southward migration that eventually led to the land of what is now known as Nubah.

Some Ofieri scholars have speculated that this ancestral homeland may have been situated in the region corresponding to modern-day southern Hannu. Nonetheless, the exact location and historical veracity of this claim remain

unverified.

11th century

At some point during the 11th century, the Nubahites became aware of lands lying beyond Barsa, prompting the gradual expansion of their trade networks.

13th century

By the early 13th century, Nubahite merchants had established regular trading routes reaching as far north as Metinna. It was not until the mid-13th century, however, that they began to appear sporadically in the territories of modern-day Northern Kingdoms. Their presence in the north was largely motivated by tales brought back from Metinna, as well as accounts from other southern peoples—such as the Ofieris, Hannuans, and Zangvebarians—regarding the distant northern realms.

Late 13th century

Toward the end of the 13th century, an anonymous Nubahite merchant—who would later be referred to in historical records simply as the *Man of N'vah*—became the subject of legendary infamy in the Northern Kingdoms. After arriving in Novigrad and investing all his earnings in the city's volatile stock exchange, he suffered catastrophic losses. Desperate and destitute, he turned to a series of audacious burglaries, targeting both private residences and commercial establishments.

Eventually forced to flee the authorities, he made his way to Oxenfurt, where he was captured and imprisoned in the Deireadh prison. During his incarceration, he was reportedly subjected to prolonged torture. Though he maintained his innocence throughout, the ordeal led him—unwillingly—to reveal considerable information about his homeland. His resistance to torture eventually frustrated the interrogators, who opted to leave him to die of starvation. He is believed to have died in early 1276.

The fragmented accounts obtained from this individual, combined with sporadic interactions with other Nubahite traders, would remain the most substantial source of knowledge about Nubah available to the Nordlings for many decades.

Appearance

Beyond the more commonly cited markers such as attire or traded goods, Nubahites can often be identified by their physical characteristics. Their skin tone is generally darker than that of many ethnic groups from Melukka, and in most cases, even darker than that of the Zangvebarians—an observation that further supports the hypothesis of a dry tropical climate in their homeland.

Nubahites are also frequently described as being notably tall, often taller than Zerrikanians. However, due to the limited number of documented interactions, this may be the result of a small and unrepresentative sample size. Nevertheless, some scholars consider this trait to support the theory that Nubah may, in fact, be an island, with isolated evolutionary development.

Another distinctive trait is the presence of epicanthic folds, which may be an adaptation to the intense luminosity believed to characterize their homeland. Eye color ranges from deep black to various shades of brown, including siena, with rare occurrences of metallic grey. Hair color tends to mirror these tones, from black to dark brown, with occasional cases of ash blonde or wheat-blonde hues. Unlike the curly or coiled hair often associated with the Zangvebarians, Nubahite hair is typically straight.

Both men and women tend to wear their hair short, with women commonly cutting it even shorter than their male counterparts.

Climate

Based on the types of animals occasionally exported by Nubahite merchants—though it remains possible that such creatures were obtained from third parties in the south—and considering the country's supposed location beyond Hannu and Melukka, it is generally assumed that Nubah lies within a tropical dry equatorial zone. However, as with many aspects of Nubah, this remains speculative.

If this assumption holds true, Nubah's climate would likely be slightly less humid than that of Zangvebar, suggesting a position somewhat farther north in relation to that country.

Geography

The geography of Nubah remains largely unknown. The few available descriptions come primarily from Ofieri traders who claim to have visited the country, though such accounts are rare and often contradictory. Nubahites merchants themselves are notoriously secretive regarding the physical characteristics of their homeland and tend to avoid direct questions about its geography.

"*I'm here for business*," they often say.

Nevertheless, by comparing the few consistent elements present in both the Ofieri testimonies and the fragmented information indirectly obtained from the so-called *Man of N'vah*, certain inferences can be made.

A possible map of N'vah

Nubah is believed to be either a sub-peninsula or an island. The land reportedly contains mountains, hills, and several arid zones, suggesting a diverse topography. These features support the hypothesis of a highland interior that gradually descends toward a drier coastal region, forming a varied landscape.

The flora and fauna are described as relatively unique, with several species not found in neighboring countries such as Zangvebar or Hannu. Some accounts also mention the existence of at least eight principal cities, though their exact locations remain unknown. Most reports place them along the coast.

Coat of Arms

Most Nubahite ships do not display a standardized national coat of arms. Instead, vessels typically carry a personal or communal emblem representing the specific crew or port of origin. As a result, the official coat of arms of Nubah—if one exists—remains uncertain.

However, a recurring symbol has been observed on multiple Nubahite vessels over the years: a closed blue eye, feminine in appearance, set against a white background. While never confirmed as a national emblem, the repeated presence of this design across unrelated merchant ships has led some scholars to consider it the most plausible candidate.

Interpretations vary, but the prevailing theory is that the symbol represents grief or longing tied to their homeland—a subtle expression of collective memory and displacement. If accurate, the closed eye may serve as a metaphor for introspection, loss, or protection against what is unseen.

Economy

In addition to their distinctive attire, Nubahite merchants are often identified by the nature of the goods they trade. In order to distinguish themselves from other traders from "*beyond the seas*" Nubahites have carved out a niche in the often-overlooked market of exotic remedies and alternative medicine. As a result, they have earned a reputation abroad for offering medicinal products allegedly crafted from ingredients native to Nubah—remedies claimed to succeed where local medicine fails.

Among the most popular are treatments derived from ivory and similar substances, which have become particularly sought after in both the Northern Kingdoms and Nilfgaard. This commercial focus has also associated Nubahite merchants—though to a lesser extent—with the ivory trade itself.

Additionally, albeit more rarely due to the logistical constraints and competition in the market, Nubahites are also known to trade in exotic animals. Documented examples include giraffes, gorillas, vibrantly colored amphibians, lemurs, and certain species of galagos not found in Zangvebar.

Some naturalists and scholars have even speculated that the spread of arachas or crab spiders in the Northern Kingdoms may be indirectly linked to Nubahite trade. These creatures, now considered an invasive pest, were reportedly unknown to traders from Hannu, Ofir, or Zangvebar before their commercial contact with the North. This has led to the theory that arachas may have originated in Nubah and were introduced unintentionally through trade cargo. However, the existence of an old elven proverb referencing the arachas casts doubt on this claim—though it is possible that the saying is a more recent invention, retroactively applied to a newer threat.

Culture

Nubahites are known to hold a particular fascination for certain minerals—most notably, pyrite. The reasons for this appreciation remain unclear. Some scholars suggest it is primarily for decorative or symbolic purposes, potentially linked to the speculated etymology of their name for the homeland. Others propose a more pragmatic explanation: that pyrite is simply rare or absent in their homeland, making it an exotic and desirable commodity.

Regardless of the underlying cause, it is well documented that Nubahite merchants often spend a portion of their commercial profits acquiring large quantities of pyrite before returning to their homeland. This behavior has even given rise to a saying among Borgese Dwarves: *"More spellbound than a Nubahite staring at pyrite."*

Some theorists have suggested that both explanations may be simultaneously valid.

In addition to the traits previously mentioned of both sexes, Nubahite men are often distinguished by their lack of facial hair, typically appearing clean-shaven or, at most, with short, well-trimmed mustaches. This absence of beards is not due to any genetic predisposition but rather to cultural norms.

The practice is widely believed to be influenced by environmental factors, particularly the presumed climate of their homeland. Given the hypothesis that Nubah lies within a hot and dry tropical region, long beards could pose hygienic risks—acting as vectors for disease in high-temperature environments.

As such, the cultural discouragement of beards among Nubahite men is viewed by many scholars as yet another indirect clue supporting the climatic and ecological profile of their native land.

Scarification is a common cultural practice among the Nubahite people—more prevalent among men than women, likely due to the heightened competitiveness associated with male social roles. Facial scarification is the most commonly observed form, although there are strong indications that body-wide scarification also exists.

The concept of tattooing, by contrast, is considered entirely foreign and extravagant within Nubahite culture. Its aesthetic and symbolic logic is reportedly viewed as incompatible or even nonsensical by many Nubahites.

The underlying meaning behind Nubahite scarification remains elusive. When asked directly, most Nubahites simply respond with: "*It's complicated*."

Several theories have emerged among foreign scholars. One posits that, due to the absence of conventional surnames or clan markings, scarification may function as a visual identifier of profession. Others suggest that it reflects achievements within a trade, akin to personal milestones or accolades. A third line of thought proposes a social signaling function—where scars communicate details relevant to courtship or personal status, such as virginity, number of

children, family health history, or other intimate data.

Clothing

The traditional clothing of the Nubahite people remains unknown. In the limited instances of contact with other cultures, Nubahite merchants have almost always been observed wearing a mismatched collection of garments associated with foreign lands—whether from neighboring countries or more distant territories. This recurring pattern has often led to confusion during trade negotiations, as Nubahite traders are frequently mistaken for citizens of other nations *beyond the seas.*

In the Northern Kingdoms and Nilfgaard in particular, Nubahite merchants are typically recognized by their eclectic fashion: a blend of multiple styles gathered during their commercial journeys, often resulting in garments of distinctly hybrid design. This characteristic appearance has led some scholars and ethnographers to theorize that Nubah may, in fact, be an island—or, at the very least, a culturally intersected region with a long-standing tradition of integrating foreign influences into its own identity.

Religion

The religious beliefs of the Nubahite people remain almost entirely unknown. No formal pantheon, doctrine, or rituals have ever been openly described by Nubahites, and they rarely discuss spiritual matters with outsiders. The only existing clues come from translated proverbs occasionally shared in trade contexts and from the fragmented testimony of the so-called *Man of N'vah* during his imprisonment.

The most widely accepted theory among Nilfgaardian and Ofieri scholars is that Nubahite religion follows a henotheistic model—a belief system situated between the polytheism typical of the Northern Kingdoms and the monotheism dominant in Nilfgaard. More specifically, some experts argue that it may represent a form of transitional henotheism, in which different gods are elevated as the supreme deity depending on the time of year, phase of life, or socio-ritual context.

Due to the absence of concrete data, however, this remains speculative. Some even question whether the Nubahites conceptualize divinity in the same

categorical terms used by Nordling or Nilfgaardian theologians, suggesting instead a more fluid or context-driven sacred order that defies conventional classification.

Nubahite Names

The Nubahite people do not use conventional names in the manner understood by most other cultures. This is rooted in a widespread spiritual belief that names possess intrinsic power. As such, Nubahite names tend to fall into two categories: deliberately short and cryptic, or excessively long and phonetically complex—both designed to obscure the individual's true identity from malevolent spirits.

It is said that only a Nubahite's parents know their child's true name. The name used in public is either a shortened or elongated version of the original, functioning as a protective veil. This tradition has led to confusion among foreigners, as seen in the case of the so-called *Man of N'vah*, whose true name was likely either unpronounceable or too short to be recognized as the concept of a name by other cultures—leading his Nordling captors to assign him the nickname by which he would later be known in historical records.

Parental authority is deeply respected throughout a Nubahite's life, with the threat of revealing a child's true name often used as a means of correcting behavior. Upon the death of one's parents, it is believed that the true name is carried with them into the afterlife, where it continues to serve as a spiritual safeguard against forces that may seek to harm their child from beyond.

Structure of True Names

A Nubahite's true name is constructed through a complex formula rooted in personal, familial, and spiritual elements. Traditionally, the full name consists of:

- The place of birth
- A description of what was occurring at the time of birth
- The father's name
- The mother's name
- A gendered suffix or marker, functioning similarly to gendered grammatical indicators in other cultures

Due to the sacred nature of true names, they are never used in public. Instead, as

previously mentioned, Nubahites employ shortened versions or restructured long forms of their full names as common identifiers. These public names are often created by reordering or abbreviating parts of the true name, and sometimes by replacing certain elements with protective words or syllables. In particularly difficult or dangerous births—especially those requiring surgical intervention—these protective elements may be further distorted phonetically in order to "confuse" malevolent spirits.

Example of Nubahite Naming Structure

- **True Name**: Jánmalándaáusenditudikobagin (Girl born in the homeland during absence)
    - **Jánmalánda** = Homeland
    - **Áusen** = "*absence*" (referring to a significant event during birth, possibly the temporary death or absence of a midwife or parent)
    - **Ditu** = father's common name.
    - **Dikoba** = mother's common name
    - **-gin** = feminine gender marker.
- **Common Short Name**: Jánádikogin

A shortened, restructured form used for everyday purposes. Combines the place of birth (Jánmalánda → Jáná), elements of the mother's and father´s common names (Ditu → Di, Dikoba → Ko) and retains the gender marker -gin.

- **Common Long Name**: Jánáwawikadikogina.

An elongated variant. Wawika is hypothesized to be a protective or nonsense word inserted to shield the name's core meaning. The structure mimics true name cadence while hiding its original form.

Unlike many other cultures—such as the Nordlings or the Skelligers—the Nubahites do not employ what might traditionally be considered surnames. While their naming practice bears some surface resemblance to the patronymic system of Skellige (e.g., -son, -dottir), it functions quite differently.

What might be interpreted as a "family name" in Nubahite tradition is instead a fusion of the common names of both parents, preceded by the prefix an-. This form serves not as a hereditary surname, but as a relational marker that links an individual directly to their progenitors.

For example:

- **Andikoditu** = "*of Dikoba and Ditu*"

(Dikoba = mother's common name; Ditu = father's common name)

Thus, a complete true name might appear as: *Jánmalándaáusenditudikobagin Andikoditu* (Girl born in the homeland during absence of Dikoba and Ditu)

Location

Nubah is situated somewhere beyond Hannu and Melukka. However, its precise location remains uncertain—particularly among the Nordlings and, to a lesser extent, even within the scholarly circles of the Nilfgaardian Empire. Cartographic records are sparse, and most available knowledge stems from fragmented oral accounts such as the one obtained from the "*Man of N´vah*".

Government

According to accounts provided by traders originating from Nubah, the region is governed through a form of demarchy—a political system in which officials are selected by sortition rather than election or inheritance. Due to the limited and anecdotal nature of these reports, however, the precise structure and functioning of this governance model remain largely speculative to outside observers.

Given this system of governance, it is assumed that Nubahite society does not follow a feudal model, at least not in the traditional sense. If feudal-like roles do exist, they are likely filled through sortition as well, resulting in a far more egalitarian social structure than is typical in the Northern Kingdoms or Nilfgaard.

Some scholars have speculated that Nubahite society functions with a relatively high degree of social parity, with status determined more by communal function than by birthright.

According to certain Nilfgaardian dissidents and revisionist historians, the democracy envisioned by Stefan Skellen—infamously referred to as "*power to the people*"—was influenced not by classical Republican Nilfgaard, which was more senatorial in nature, but by contact with Nubahite merchants and books brought and translated from their homeland.

Though officially dismissed by the imperial court as slander or speculation, this theory has persisted in fringe political circles, suggesting that Nubahite demarchy may have briefly inspired political reform efforts within the Empire, before being violently suppressed with the arrest of Skellen in Stygga Castle and his later execution.

Known locations

While the precise geography of Nubah remains obscure, a handful of named locations have appeared—either in speculative maps produced by foreign scholars or in fragmented merchant accounts.

- Baniba
- Kanuwa
- Kedakan
- Lebse
- Nubïrhe
- Sarfa
- Sukhú
- Zehlin

Trivia

- The name *An-Nūwah* is a direct reference to the historical designation used by Arab cultures for the region of Nubia.
- The concept of Nubah was inspired by an easter egg found in *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, specifically in the list of prisoners held at the Deireadh prison in Oxenfurt. Among the names is a mention of a "*Man of N'vah*," which serves as a nod to GuyofNwah, a former moderator of the CD Projekt Red forums.
- The term *N'vah* is also a linguistic coincidence with the Dunmer insult *n'wah* from *The Elder Scrolls* series, which roughly translates to "slave" or "foreigner."
- Beyond the evident Nubian inspiration, Nubah was designed—similarly to Gubakuni, which embodies Afro-Asian representation—as a place that offers Indo-African representation in an organic manner. Cultural and historical influences include the Siddi (of India and Pakistan), the Dougla (of the Caribbean), and the Chagossian peoples, with additional minor elements

drawn from the Zambo populations of the Americas.

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